

Message from the Chief

Chief's Memo – August 1, 2006

Battling California's Wildfires

I place a high priority on putting out my weekly message. As you know, I missed last week's memo. That should tell you how hectic and busy things have been in the last few weeks. It should also tell you that I know how busy all of you have been as well. In my weekly memo I try to give you current and accurate information about what is happening in Sacramento and around the state. I also try to inspire you a little bit with the positive things that are happening in CDF, although I'm not opposed to letting you know when things are not going so well. I am not one who tends to linger on the negative. There are enough people in this world that will do that. I encourage all of our employees, supervisors, and managers to focus on the positive and to lead and inspire one another to new heights.



So, this week I want to tell you that I have been inspired over and over again by the dedicated, hard working, and professional job that all CDF employees are doing. I am inspired by the creative, open, and "out of the box" thinking that I have observed over the past three weeks. The courage, strategic thinking, and the toughness of CDF employees who are "Battling California's Wildfires" inspire me. From the frontline firefighter to every support position, you all are meeting the challenges.

And the challenges have been many! Within the past two weeks CDF moved strike teams onto Catalina Island with a hovercraft from the US Marine Corps to battle a fire near the airport. We also fought a fire at a federal military base, Camp Pendleton, preventing the fire from reaching a major high voltage transmission line that provides power to all of southern San Diego during a heat wave that caused over 100 deaths statewide. We did the same thing at the "Lakin fire" in Northern California, protecting another high voltage transmission power line that served much of northern California. At the Junction Fire we battled a fast-moving wildfire headed toward Weaverville and stopped the flames before they reached 2,000 homes. These are just a few of the successful campaigns that have engaged us, not mention the many other large fires and hundreds of initial attack fires throughout California.

We have worked closely with our local, state, and federal partners in many of these fires. The communication and cooperation with our federal partners, the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, is

unparalleled. The USFS requested, and we agreed, with a unified command at the Lakin fire, which is solely federal direct protection area (DPA). The recognition of the potential impact on the state power grid warranted such an unusual action. The USFS participated on conference calls with the Governor's office, and us, as well as on a conference call with the media, whose interest was peaked with the potential fire outcome.

We have worked closely with the Office of Emergency Services and the California National Guard. OES Director Henry Renteria and CNG General Bill Wade, and their staffs, have made every resource available to assist our local, state, and federal partners and us. The California National Guard has provided as many as eight helicopters to support our efforts. OES strike teams from local government fire departments have been moved around the state and provided great assistance.

Our communications and legislative staff has been doing a stellar job in every CDF Unit and in Sacramento. One of the major criticisms after the 2003 Firestorm was our ability to keep the legislature and the public informed with accurate and timely information. Our communications and legislative staff has worked tirelessly keeping legislators and the public informed. We have added a feature on the Governor's website called "Battling California's Wildfires" at <http://www.calfires.com/>



Your outstanding work has not gone unnoticed. Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman, Cabinet Secretary, Fred Aguiar, the Governor's Chief of Staff, Susan

Kennedy, and the Governor have all expressed appreciation for your efforts "Battling California's Wildfires." I continue to be proud of all of you and will continue to work with our leadership team to support you from Sacramento.

On another positive note, I have been fortunate to be in a position of selecting a significant number of Unit Chiefs to lead CDF into the future. It has been a good mix of well-experienced leaders. Today, I have just left the Riverside County Board of Supervisors meeting where Chief John Hawkins was publicly announced as the new Unit Chief for Riverside County. His wife, Carol, also pinned on his new collar brass as a "State Certified Fire Chief," the only one in CDF, and one of only a few in California. Congratulations are due to John and his family.

Finally, last week I received an e-mail from the wife of one of our firefighters. He had taken a copy of a "Weekly Memo" home for her to read. It was the one I had written for next month's California Fire Service magazine that describes CDF from my view inside ("Inside CDF"). She expressed her appreciation for what her husband does and an understanding for why he has such pride in his job. That e-mail has encouraged me to move the "Weekly Memo" from the CDF Intranet to the CDF Internet so that CDF family members can have access to these weekly updates. So, within the next few weeks the Communications staff will do so.

Keep up the great work. I appreciate all you do to make CDF a great place to work.

Regards,



Ruben Grijalva, Chief
Director / State Fire Marshal

Mobile Equipment Management

The Dept. of General Services, Procurement Division, has completed the bid review process and has awarded purchase orders for our next purchase of Fire Apparatus and ECTs. Purchase orders have been issued to Rosenbauer/Central States Fire Apparatus in Lyons, South Dakota for the manufacturing of our next family of 42 Model # 34s and to Braun Northwest in Chehalis, Washington for the construction of the next 25 ECTs.

Southern Region

Some of the best minds from all of the units, both regions and all the sections gathered two weeks in Sacramento to close the CDF books for FY 05/06. In addition to taxing their brains, these folks opened their hearts and pocketbooks to raise enough money to send one child to Muscular Dystrophy Camp. Their efforts should be commended.

All units (including Sacramento units) are required to complete a “midyear” estimate so that the department Budget Office can estimate whether the department will likely end the fiscal year in the black or the red. It is always a challenge to project expenditures for the rest of the fiscal year in January and a welcome surprise when a unit(s) comes very close to their estimate. This year in the Southern Region, the San Diego Unit came within \$20,000 of hitting their estimate on a total expenditure of more than \$32 million. That is truly remarkable.

As part of the shift of Amador-El Dorado Unit from the Southern Region to the Northern Region is the need to shift the coordination of several Management Services processes from the oversight of one region to the other. In an effort to prevent paperwork falling through the cracks, the processes have been identified and will be transitioned in a systematic manner. The first series of several Management Services processes will be transitioned on August 1, 2006. These include RPP oversight, cost collection, FEPP inventory coordination, administration of employee actions, and functions accomplished by staff in Personnel, including such things as hiring coordination, the Schedule 8, and vacancy reports.

Office of State Fire Marshal

SFM staff is meeting regularly with the Code Development Committee of the Building Standards Commission to review the OSFM's proposed changes to the International Building and Fire Codes. The results of the meetings have been favorable with much support for the OSFM's proposed amendments. The OSFM is working with the city of Los Angeles and the state Department of Toxic Substances Control regarding an issue related to the disposal of illegal fireworks. The fireworks were involved in a fire and subsequently placed in buckets of water. The liquid is now considered hazardous to the environment.

Resource Management

CDF has been asked to participate in a “Stakeholders” meeting on August 9 in Portland to discuss a recovery strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl. The opportunity to provide the USFWS with meaningful input will hopefully also benefit CDF in how we deal with NSO during our Timber Harvest Plan review process. The Service intends to release the draft recovery plan to the public in mid-November followed by a 60-day public comment period. A final plan is expected by November 2007.

Forest Practice staff is working aggressively with Agency and DFG in the formatting of draft 2112 regulations into Board of Forestry rule format. The 2112 rules (refers to the section 2112 in the Fish and Game Code) were initially drafted by DFG as a means to address incidental take for Coho salmon.

Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman suggested to the Board of Forestry at its July meeting that they consider the draft 2112 rules as a proposed BOF rule package since much of the emphasis behind the draft rules pertains to watercourse protection, timber operations near unstable features, and road

use/maintenance. More formal discussion regarding the proposed rule package is scheduled for the upcoming BOF meeting in Santa Cruz, August 1-3.

Sacramento Forest Hydrologist, Pete Cafferata is working with DFG, CGS and WQ representatives to schedule interdepartmental training for this upcoming Fall. The primary intended audience will be forest practice inspectors and other sister agency representatives involved in THP review. The topics of road crossings, road abandonment, and road water diversions may be the focus of the training. However, other possibilities are also being considered at this time.

Communications

As part of its ongoing campaign on Defensible Space, CDF Communications now has billboard space in several locations throughout the Inland Empire courtesy of Lamar Advertising (below). The company agreed to post the area billboards for free at the request of CDF Communications. The company will move the boards to various sites depending upon demand by paying customers. The company was also kind enough to connect the department with other billboard companies who will also donate space. This will get the “Why 100 feet?” campaign out to those stuck in traffic.



The CDF Billboard on Interstate 10 in Riverside